

This month in [wjm](#)

Snowboarders are injured more often than skiers

Snowboarding is one of the fastest-growing winter sports in the world. In the 1999-2000 season, 3.3 million snowboarders contributed about 13.5 million visits to US ski resorts. Although mortality rates are low, recent cohort studies suggest that the rate and severity of injuries are higher among snowboarders than among skiers. On p 128, Dunn reviews the health hazards of snowboarding. In addition to injuries, snowboarders risk abdominal injury, pulmonary air leaks, hypothermia, and asphyxiation due to headfirst immersion in deep snow. In a commentary on p 130, Danielson, a snowboarding instructor, gives advice on staying healthy on the slopes.

Preventive medicine may not be cost-effective

We often assume that preventive interventions must by nature be cost-effective. Surely an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure? Maybe not, argues Shenkin in a Point-Counterpoint on p 85. Promoting prevention, he says, means that people will live longer, which will impose a greater burden on the health care system. But many preventive services provide excellent value for money, counters Teutsch on p 84. Among these are childhood immunizations, counseling people about stopping tobacco use, and screening for cervical and colorectal cancers.

In-line skaters fail to protect themselves

As in-line skating becomes more popular, for both recreation and getting around the city, rates of injury and death are expected to rise. Injuries can be prevented by wearing appropriate protective gear, including helmets, elbow and knee pads, and wrist guards. But in an observational study in Boston, Osberg and Stiles found that only about 6% of skaters wore helmets (p 99). Male skaters were less likely than female skaters to wear wrist guards and knee pads, and the age group most likely to be unprotected was adolescents. Usatine, in his commentary on p 102, says that the time has come for legislation mandating that skaters protect themselves.

Walking and gardening can boost health

In the 1970s and 1980s, many physicians encouraged their patients to take up regular, vigorous exercise programs to improve their physical fitness. Most people ignored this advice, and 60% of the US public remains sedentary most of the time. New evidence has emerged that physical activity of low to moderate intensity—like walking or even gardening—can improve cardiometabolic health. On p 114, Pescatello explains how physicians can promote such “lifestyle physical activity.”